

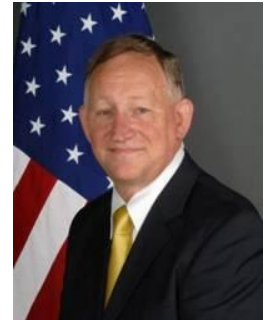


EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

RIYADH • SAUDI ARABIA



**Ambassador James B. Smith**  
**Taped Remarks for King Abdullah Scholarship Program Commencement**  
**May 26, 2012**



*Asalamu Alaykum!*

*Your Excellency Dr. Khalid al-Angari, Minister of Higher Education,*

*Your Excellency Ambassador Adel al Jubair, Saudi Ambassador to the United States,*

*Dr. Mohammed Al Issa, Cultural Attaché, Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, and all the wonderful people in the cultural mission,*

*Proud Families and Friends of the Graduates of class 2012:*

*Mabrook* to all the 2012 graduates, your families, and all the participants and institutions cooperating with the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. And thank you for allowing me the honor to be a part of this celebration.

My friends, this is a joyous occasion and a memorable day for both our countries. As the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I am proud to see that you have opted to study in our country and to be open to new ideas and perhaps new ways of looking at the world. You are among the more than 66,000 Saudi students studying in the U.S. today. Partly because of your positive experience here, another 6,300 of your fellow students are now part of the seventh wave of the KASP program coming to America this year. I salute your success.

And to your families, I say this: we are honored that you have entrusted us with your most valuable assets, your sons and daughters. We feel honored but also feel we are shouldering a weighty responsibility, a responsibility that we don't take lightly. I thank you for your trust in the United States. My pledge to you is we will never betray this trust and we will treat your children with the same care we do our own.

I would like to salute the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosque King Abdullah for his vision and stewardship of this forward looking educational program. And I would like to salute Dr. Khalid Al-Anqari for his leadership at the Ministry of the Higher Education.

I also salute my dear friend and esteemed colleague, Ambassador Adel Al-Jubeir and Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa for their leadership and commitment to your success. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the great work of the Saudi Cultural Mission and its dedicated staff.

My country is proud to be helping King Abdullah succeed in implementing his vision that will also help create the kind of interconnected and tolerant world that President Obama called for in his Cairo speech almost three years ago to the day. King Abdullah is looking to U.S. universities to play an important role in educating his country's youth, and has already sent a large number of students and their families, including you, to the U.S. to study in our best schools.

Graduates, your presence here today is testimony that you have already achieved something important in your lives: getting a decent education. All of you should be proud of your individual achievements as well as the example you set for others. Your graduation encourages and inspires others to aspire to learn from you. And with this education and experience, you will make a better future for your brothers and sisters, and family and friends, and eventually to your country.

I sincerely hope you have had a rewarding experience in the U.S. and that you got the quality education that you came for and you deserve. But I also hope that you have made American friends, enjoyed your time here, that you have made the time to explore and ask questions. I hope you have been good ambassadors for your great country. We are all part of the exchange between our two nations. This exchange works because it is a two-way exchange. While you may be leaving our country this month, I know that you will always be the bridges and the bonds that will draw our countries together, and for that I can't be more grateful.

Hurry home! Your next step will be as part of a dynamic country moving forward. Whether you pursue a job in the government, education, medicine, industry, or as an entrepreneur - you will find Saudi Arabia moving forward in a booming economy but looking for a diversified economy. Your country needs your brains. Your country needs your hard work. Your country needs you to succeed.

Let me close by offering my warmest greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz for his vision and leadership in this scholarship program. Your graduation today is vindication that his vision is a noble one. On behalf of President Obama, myself, and the American people, I offer my sincerest congratulations to all of you and your families on your wonderful achievement. Good luck to you in all of your future endeavors, wherever they may take you. *Wasalamu Alaykum*.